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AOSIS in the UNFCCC negotiations: from unity to fragmentation?

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Abstract

Small island states were able to obtain some remarkable achievements in the climate change negotiations by building a cohesive coalition, the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). The cohesion of the Alliance, however, has been affected by changes in the UNFCCC process. The multiplication of issues on the climate agenda and the increasing number of negotiation groups may help or hinder compromise and finding common ground.

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Keywords: adaptation; Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS); coalitions; forestry; fragmentation; climate change negotiations; LULUCF; mitigation; REDD.

1. Introduction

When, in 1990, island countries worldwide recognised the disproportionate vulnerability of their territories and populations to the negative consequences of climate change, they came together in a negotiating group, the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). AOSIS's main purpose is to defend island interests in the international negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), where it can point to some remarkable accomplishments. Despite the smallness and lack of political clout of its members, AOSIS has become one of the key players in the UNFCCC negotiations. This recognition itself is a notable success for island microstates. Further achievements include the specific small island developing states (SIDS) seat on the various bodies established under the Convention and its 1997 Kyoto Protocol, or, more recently, consideration to strengthen the goal of keeping global temperature rises below 1.5°C. Much of this success is related to SIDS forming a tight coalition that allowed members to overcome some of their individual limitations and make their voice heard (Ashe, et al., 1999; Betzold, 2010; McMahon, 1993).

Since the foundation of AOSIS, however, the UNFCCC process has undergone profound changes. Not only are more and more issues placed under the ever-growing climate change agenda; also, more and more country groups are formed in the negotiations, with diverging positions on the various agenda items. By now, a plethora of overlapping country groups exist in the negotiations (see Figure 1), from single-issue coalitions like the Coalition of Rainforest Nations founded in 2005, to the leftist Bolivarian Alliance of the Peoples of our Americas (ALBA) created in 2004.

--- figure 1 about here ---

Presumably, this growth in coalitions makes it more difficult for any one of them to get their voice heard; similarly, the multiplication of issues has implications for the coordination among coalition members. On the one hand, it may be more difficult to find common ground as individual interests and concerns on specific agenda items become more visible. On the other hand, and quite to the contrary, the multiplication of topics may facilitate compromising through issue linkages and side payments.

This paper hence takes the fragmentation of the negotiating process as its starting point and asks to what extent the multiplication of issues as well as country groups has affected AOSIS. Has the cohesiveness of the Alliance, one of its key characteristics and strengths, diminished over time, as issues multiplied and differences among members may have

become more visible? Or, to the contrary, has group cohesion remained stable or even increased as a broader agenda has given compromising more space? Or alternatively, does group cohesion reassert itself on the most fundamental questions such as mitigation commitments, even when more complex relationships are at play?

In order to map common positions as well as differences in views and priorities over time, at least as far as they appear to wider audiences, this article relies on public data available for the entire period of analysis, including official submissions from AOSIS members; reports of the negotiations in the Earth Negotiations Bulletin; and the lists of participants to selected meetings. It compares these sources over three distinct periods in the climate change regime: its early phase from 1995 to 2000; an implementation phase from 2001 to 2005; and the recent period from 2006 to 2011 focusing on a follow-up to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol and its first commitment period. Information obtained from interviews with delegates backs up some of the findings for the most recent period.

The data indicate changes over time. First, submissions and interventions as a group have decreased relative to individual activities. Differences in positions become more evident when looking at specific issue areas, particularly those related to Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) and Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD). Possibly, this suggests that, while AOSIS still remains a fairly tight negotiating coalition, it has become more difficult to uphold unity.

The next section briefly surveys existing literature on AOSIS in the climate change negotiations; followed by insights on coalition and group cohesion from negotiation theory and an overview over the data and methods used. Section 5 compares then AOSIS's positions generally, as well as with regard to adaptation, mitigation, LULUCF and REDD, over the three periods outlined above. Section 6 summarizes and concludes.

2. AOSIS' sources of negotiation success

Despite important differences in terms of culture, language, and geography, SIDS face common challenges, including their disproportionate vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change (Kelman and West, 2009; Mimura, et al., 2007; Wong, 2011). Early on, island states worldwide recognized this commonality, as well as the need for inter-regional cooperation, given their very limited individual economic and political clout. Consequently, under the leadership of the Maldives, Vanuatu and Trinidad and Tobago, 24 island states from all UN regions formed AOSIS in 1990 as a trans-regional, informal

coalition in the negotiations for the UNFCCC (Chasek, 2005; Heileman, 1993; Taplin, 1994).

Since then, membership has increased to currently 39 full members (AOSIS, 2011; Fry, 2005) that work together largely based on consultation and coordination (Honoré, 2004, p. 7).[1] Although AOSIS has somewhat broadened its scope (see Chasek, 2005; Fry, 2005), its main focus remains on the climate change negotiations. Here, AOSIS is by now recognized as a major player (Yamin and Depledge, 2004) – no small feat for these microstates that, even combined, have less than 1% each of world territory, population, GDP, and greenhouse gas emissions.[2] Beyond recognition, the Alliance can point to some remarkable accomplishments. Most prominently, SIDS obtained a seat on the Bureau, a position that until then had been the privilege of the five UN regional groups.[3] AOSIS has managed to perpetuate this key achievement, and managed to obtain a SIDS seat in other UNFCCC bodies, such as the Executive Board of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) or the boards of the Adaptation Fund or the Green Climate Fund.[4]

Early studies on the UNFCCC process thus ascribe considerable influence to AOSIS. Davis (1996, p. 18), for instance, argues that "these small and relatively powerless developing states have managed to exert a profound and continuing impact on global climate policy" while former AOSIS negotiators Ashe et al. (1999, p. 209) even claim that the UNFCCC "represented a singular triumph [for AOSIS]" (see also Betzold, 2010; Shibuya, 1996; Taplin, 1994).

Several factors have been identified as important in explaining the remarkable influence of these otherwise fairly powerless countries. Davis (1996) lists four main factors: the "truth and justness of its cause" (p. 19), the support by the best available scientific evidence, the Alliance's sense of unity due to the common threat of climate change, and the strong and skilled leadership by AOSIS's first chair, ni-Vanuatu ambassador Robert Van Lierop. What Davis calls "truth and justness" is generally referred to as vulnerability. This extreme sensitivity of small islands to the consequences of climate change gives AOSIS moral leverage. Larson (2003, 2005) hence argues that AOSIS successfully highlighted their strong exposure to changing climatic conditions, as well as the negative effects of climate change for all countries worldwide, which helped to forge coalitions with more powerful groups of countries, especially the EU and more progressive countries within the G-77 and China. In a similar vein, the group's former vice-chair Tiuloma Neroni Slade (2003, p. 534) underlines the cooperative nature and consensus orientation of small island state diplomacy more generally, as well as the

inclination toward coalitions and like-minded countries. He notes that islands "instinctively [...] recognise strength in acting together, whether as regional sub-groups of the Caribbean or Pacific countries, or as the larger Alliance of Small Island States".

These soft negotiation strategies also figure prominently in Betzold (2010). According to her analysis of the climate regime up to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, AOSIS managed to highlight common interests, raise moral concerns, as well as "play by the rules". AOSIS as a group early on participated very actively in the process, was well prepared and enjoyed a first-mover advantage vis-à-vis other groups (see also Ashe, et al., 1999; McMahon, 1993). This early full participation, however, was only possible by forming a coalition and pooling resources, since SIDS individually have limited negotiating capacity, with many of their delegations consisting only of one or two representatives (e.g. Chasek, 2005; McMahon, 1993; McNamara and Gibson, 2009).

Participation as a bloc is important for AOSIS's influence, but it is not always easy to find a common denominator among 39 countries. Despite their common vulnerability, small island states are threatened by climate change in different ways. Whereas some states that consist exclusively of low-lying atolls such as the Maldives, Kiribati or Tuvalu, have to worry about their very existence as states (Yamamoto and Esteban, 2010), other countries face serious impacts in coastal zones, but may be able to adapt, such as Belize or Cuba. Similarly, climate regulations affect AOSIS members differently. With large tropical forest covers, countries like Papua New Guinea, Suriname or Guyana are interested in compensation payments as part of REDD, while others, in particular Singapore with its large harbour, have a special interest in bunker fuels and maritime transport. In other words, as the UNFCCC process increases in scope and complexity, different and potentially diverging interests should become more pronounced.

3. Coalitions in Multilateral Negotiations

What do such lines of divergence imply from a theoretical perspective? The literature on coalitions in multilateral negotiations highlights two opposite effects of an increase in the number of issues and interests on coalition cohesion. On the one hand, a broader agenda provides more opportunities for divergent interests to appear, and thus hinders reaching common ground (e.g. Constantini, et al., 2007). On the other hand, it has been argued, adding issues might in fact facilitate compromising by allowing for issue linkages and side payments (Sebenius, 1984).

Coalitions are a defining feature of multilateral negotiations. As soon as there are more than two parties, negotiators start forming groups (Dupont, 1996). The main purpose of such groups is to increase the individual members' negotiating power and thus their potential gains (Starkey, et al., 2008). The increase in bargaining power, however, comes at a price. Since the coalition's position is a compromise of the positions of all coalition members, this price can be relatively high when an individual coalition member's ideal policy is far from the coalition's joint position. In contrast, the cost will be lower the closer individual preferences are to the overall common position. Building and maintaining a coalition is thus easier among homogeneous members (Axelrod, 1970; Constantini, et al., 2007; Garrett and Tsebelis, 1996).

In single-issue negotiations, it should be relatively easy to identify common interests and agree on a common position. In contrast, more issues provide more opportunities for diverging interests to appear among coalition members, and thus make it more difficult to hold the collective together. From this perspective, it might be expected that it has, over time, become more difficult for AOSIS to uphold its unity. Since AOSIS countries differ in how climate change affects them, they value certain issues very differently, and their individual interest may thus be relatively far from the coalition position, at least in certain areas. Furthermore, with a better understanding of climate change and its implications as well as of the negotiation process, individual states may be better aware of their interests and how they relate to group positions. Lines of divergence may thus be expected to be more visible now as compared to the early years of the climate change regime, when uncertainty was even more prevalent.[5]

On the other hand, it has been proposed that adding issues may in fact help compromising. More issues that are negotiated simultaneously provide opportunities for issue linkages and side payments. Thus, if country A is reluctant to agree to the joint position on one issue, the coalition might be able to get that support by in return promising A to support it on another issue that is valued highly by A (Sebenius, 1984).

Such exchanges, however, are only possible if there are many, differently valued issues on the agenda. Hence, cooperation across many issues is used to explain why very heterogeneous groups like the Group of 77 (G77) have been able to maintain cooperation despite diverse interests (e.g. Najam, 2004; Vihma, et al., 2011).

According to this line of reasoning, then, AOSIS unity should not have suffered from the multiplication of issues on the UNFCCC agenda. Because AOSIS members value different items differently, adding them onto the agenda opens up room for compromise,

and hence facilitates coalition maintenance. Further, the growing certainty of climate change may, rather than highlight divergences, in fact serve to emphasize the overarching common interest: a strong climate change regime in the face of island vulnerability.

4. Data and Methods

The empirical analysis compares three distinct periods of negotiations:

- A first period from 1995 to 2000 centred on the design of the Kyoto Protocol.
- A second period from 2001 to 2005, starting with the Marrakesh Accords that focused negotiations on the detailed rules and operationalization of the Kyoto Protocol and its flexibility mechanisms.
- A third period from 2006 to 2010, in which the focus shifted to negotiations about a second commitment period for the Kyoto Protocol and an eventual new protocol.

For such a comparison, data on the negotiations since 1995 is needed. Therefore, the paper relies on submissions by AOSIS and its member states to the UNFCCC as well as lists of participants to key negotiation sessions. This material is supplemented with negotiation summaries as published in the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* (ENB) as well as interviews with AOSIS negotiators.

Governments, usually upon request, provide submissions to share views and perspectives on specific topics, and to allow chairs and the Secretariat to compile text for negotiations. All submissions by AOSIS and its member states were manually coded in terms of their author(s), possible co-authors, as well as content based on the general topic and word counts of specific markers as listed in table 1.[6]

--- table 1 about here ----

For UNFCCC meetings in years in which major stepping stones in the climate regime were achieved (table 2)[7], information about the composition of AOSIS delegations was extracted.[8] For each AOSIS delegate, information on the type of their affiliation (government or non-governmental) as well as their detailed background (e.g. type of ministry for governmental delegates) was coded.

--- table 2 about here ----

For the period between COP13 in Bali (December 2007) and COP15 in Copenhagen (December 2009), summaries of the open negotiation sessions from the ENB (International Institute for Sustainable Development, IISD, 2007-2009) were also hand-

coded. Count variables were created that provide information on how often a country made an intervention on a specific negotiation topic, and how often statements were supported or opposed by another country (see Castro, et al., 2011).[9]

Finally, interviews conducted in the context of the wider study on climate change negotiations (Weiler, 2012, in this issue), were analysed to get some more insight into individual country positions in the current round of negotiations and their relationship to AOSIS.

A comparison of the group with the individual country level can map differences in views and priorities, as well as changes over time and across issue areas, at least as portrayed to wider audiences in the submissions and interventions. It is clear that this material does not convey information on internal processes, with much of the negotiations occurring behind closed doors, nor does it provide insights on motivations behind observed changes. Nonetheless, the picture obtained through this analysis provides a useful starting point for tracking the evolution of AOSIS over time.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. AOSIS' and AOSIS members' interests over time

Written submissions

--- figure 2 about here ---

Figure 2 shows developments in the amount of written submissions sent by AOSIS and its member countries to the UNFCCC in the three periods of analysis. Three types of submissions were differentiated: those made by AOSIS as a group; those made by individual AOSIS members; and those by AOSIS members jointly with other countries (which may or may not be AOSIS members themselves).[10] In the first two periods (i.e. between 1995 and 2005), most submissions were made by AOSIS as a group, with relatively few individual or joint submissions. From 2006 on, however, the majority of AOSIS countries have made at least one submission independently of AOSIS. While AOSIS group submissions are still high in number, their proportion, when compared to the individual or joint submissions, has declined notably.

Most active are Belize, Papua New Guinea, Singapore and Tuvalu, with several countries also having a relatively high amount of joint submissions.[11] The Dominican

Republic, for example, frequently makes submissions with other Latin American countries outside AOSIS, and did so already in the 1990s.

With regard to content, the main topic of the submissions as well as an analysis of keywords[12] yield a similar picture. Figure 3 shows changes in the relative importance of the different main topics over time. In general, topics related to climate mitigation were very important in the 1990s in the run-up to Kyoto and again from 2006 on. Among these topics, LULUCF and the CDM, that is, the detailed rules about how to operationalize the Kyoto Protocol, were more important in the 1990s, while in 2006-2011, more general mitigation targets and REDD have seen most submissions. The topic of adaptation, in theory very important for the subsistence of small island states, is generally less prominent in the submissions than mitigation, probably because it is a less contentious topic than mitigation targets. Surprisingly, finance and technology appear to have been more important in the two first periods than in the last one in relative terms, although in recent years negotiations on a new financial mechanism of the Convention have gained in relevance. Not surprisingly, submissions regarding a protocol were important in the 1990s (towards Kyoto) and from 2006 on (new protocol, or reform of Kyoto).

--- figure 3 about here ---

Overall, this descriptive analysis hints towards a reduced importance of AOSIS group submissions in the latest negotiation round, while at the same time the different negotiation topics have varied in importance, or new topics have emerged. Does the decrease in group submissions simply reflect shifts in the climate change agenda, or is there a genuine time trend toward individual rather than group activity?

A more detailed analysis of the topics for which group or individual submissions predominate can shed light on this question. Keyword counts in submissions by countries reveal that AOSIS as a group remains prominent in submissions related to adaptation or vulnerability, financial support, and technology or capacity building. If, in contrast, individual submissions are considered as an indicator of possible diverging positions within the group, some topics show a larger dispersion of interests: with respect to mitigation commitments, Tuvalu, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Dominican Republic are the most active AOSIS countries, followed by Solomon Islands and Singapore, mainly in the period 2006-2011. However, this does not indicate divergence. A more detailed analysis (see below) reveals that many of these individual submissions are used to reiterate and reinforce group positions, such as the demand for emissions cuts in the order of 40% compared to 1990 levels. Land-use and forestry issues were mentioned most frequently by

Tuvalu, followed by Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, Dominican Republic, Solomon Islands, Belize, and Singapore. The interest of most of these countries in the forestry sector seems to have started only during the 2006-2011 period, which points towards a special focus on REDD – and here, individual submissions indeed point toward different viewpoints, with different countries proposing divergent ways of dealing with forests. The word "market" follows a very similar pattern to the terms related to forestry. Interestingly, both for forestry and markets, some individual countries appear to be more active than AOSIS as a group, as revealed by the fact that the word counts are larger for these individual countries than for AOSIS group submissions (see e.g. Figure 6 below).

Oral interventions

The analysis of the oral interventions in the negotiations, as reported in the ENBs, shows similar patterns. Table 3 compares the topics that, according to the ENB coding, were most relevant for AOSIS as a group and for the AOSIS countries that intervened more than ten times in the period between Bali and Copenhagen. While AOSIS as a group has participated repeatedly on topics such as adaptation, mitigation, finance and capacity building or technology transfer, which are of general interest to all vulnerable countries, it has made very few group interventions on LULUCF and REDD. Some individual AOSIS members, however, have participated actively in the LULUCF and REDD discussions, among them Tuvalu, Papua New Guinea, Guyana, Singapore and Micronesia.

--- table 3 about here ---

The coding of the ENBs also shows some instances in which AOSIS member countries have openly held opposing positions in the negotiations. In the Bonn meeting in August 2009, Papua New Guinea and Tuvalu were reported to have opposing views on LULUCF accounting and on LULUCF eligibility under the CDM (Fry, 2008). The forestry sector thus appears to be one of the contentious issues among SIDS. But other issues have also generated disagreement: In the Bangkok meeting in October 2009, Singapore joined some non-AOSIS countries in proposing that the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Maritime Organization take the lead in regulating emissions from aviation and maritime transport (which was later supported by Cook Islands[13]), whereas Tuvalu and Micronesia suggested that such regulations need to be guided by the Convention. At COP15, Papua New Guinea reportedly stated that they did not support the AOSIS proposal for a continuation of the Kyoto Protocol and an additional protocol to enhance action under the Convention.

Country delegations

Over time, the delegations of small island states to the UNFCCC meetings have grown importantly in size, as shown in Table 4. Especially for COP meetings in which important decisions are expected, the aggregated AOSIS delegation has become quite large. If coordination among AOSIS members is high, such a delegation is an important resource for small island states. Closer analysis shows that the growth in delegation size has not been equal across AOSIS members – Singapore, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Micronesia and Tuvalu are the countries that have had the largest delegations at some point and are thus the focus of the analysis below.

These differences across AOSIS members could be due simply to different economic or human resources, or different ways of dealing with national delegations[14], but they could also signal a diversification of interests within some AOSIS members as the negotiations progressed.[15] Broadly, the core of the delegations should be composed of representatives from agencies related to environment, climate change and meteorology, and the foreign service, which have traditionally negotiated the climate change issue. Many representatives from the ministry of finance, economy or development may be an indicator of concerns about how to finance climate-related action. Representatives from other governmental sectors or from business may indicate the existence of other interests.

--- table 4 about here ---

Figure 4 shows our findings in terms of the composition by sector of the delegations of the five countries mentioned above. Changes over time and differences across delegations become evident. Indeed, delegates from "environment or foreign affairs" make up the largest part of the delegations analysed. Concerns about climate change impacts and reliance on career diplomats explain a large part of the selected countries' delegations. From the other governmental sectors, Singapore is the only country in the sample that includes representatives of the energy sector (since 2001), and Papua New Guinea and Singapore the only ones with representatives from agriculture (since 2006).

--- figure 4 about here ---

Looking beyond sectors, Figure 5 shows the composition of the five delegations during 2006-2011. The differences across countries become more evident. Specialists on forestry, the CDM and carbon markets appear only in the delegation of Papua New Guinea, while

references to energy and aviation or maritime transport seem important only for the delegation of Singapore.

Such differences confirm differenct priorities across AOSIS member countries. While climate change and environmental considerations are still the most important topic among all delegations, more specific issues such as carbon markets, forests and emissions from energy and transport seem to be relevant agenda items for certain countries, among them Papua New Guinea and Singapore.

--- figure 5 about here ---

In summary, while some topics appear thus to be negotiated by AOSIS as a group, others seem to be negotiated by individual member countries. However, this analysis still cannot show whether these observations reflect a divergence in interests, or a strategy of specialization between them. A closer look at the issue areas of adaptation, mitigation, LULUCF and REDD help to better understand the implications of the observed changes.

5.2. Positions on adaptation and mitigation

Unsurprisingly, adaptation and mitigation figure prominently among the issues of relatively high importance to AOSIS. Of a total of 176 submissions produced by the group or its members since 1995, 17% are dedicated to mitigation, and 11% to adaptation. If one considers that the early AOSIS protocol proposals were mainly focused on mitigation, and the more recent ones have very important components of both adaptation and mitigation, then these figures would grow further. Whether these figures suggest a stronger interest of AOSIS for mitigation than for adaptation measures, or whether mitigation has simply been a more contested issue due to the evolution of the negotiations, cannot be concluded clearly from the analysis of submission counts. However, some evidence does point out that the relative importance of mitigation versus adaptation varies across AOSIS member countries, which supports the idea that the SIDS are not an entirely homogeneous block. For example, a Maldives representative specified in an interview that more money contributed by Annex I countries should be earmarked for adaptation, where there is no market.[16] On the contrary, some countries such as Papua New Guinea, Grenada, or Vanuatu do not concede much space to adaptation in their individual submissions or those jointly with non-AOSIS countries. Papua New Guinea, for example, gives adaptation only room for 0.25% of its statements, while mitigation gets much more attention (31%; forest receives most attention, with 40% of statements). This

echoes an interview with a delegation member of Papua New Guinea, who ranked the contact group on enhanced action on mitigation as the most important for the country, while the contact group on enhanced action on adaptation is not among the three top-priority contact groups.[17] At the opposite end of the spectrum is Comoros, which does not consider mitigation in its individual submissions at all, while 63% of the statements have adaptation as the central topic.

This is a first indication that differences regarding mitigation and adaptation exist wtihin AOSIS. As described above, there is also a change in the relative importance of group and individual submissions on mitigation and adaptation over time. During the first period from 1995 to 2000, 89% of references in the written submissions to adaptation and 71% of references to mitigation were made on behalf of the group (figures based on keyword counts). The picture for the second time period, 2001 to 2005, seems relatively stable, with 72% of all statements in the submissions concerning mitigation and 64% of those concerning adaptation made on behalf of the group. A downward trend in group submissions becomes clearer in the third period from 2006 to 2011. A division is particularly pronounced for mitigation, with only 19% of references in written submissions made on behalf of the group. Tuvalu (21%) and Papua New Guinea (11%) are leading with regard to the number of individual and joint statements. During this period, 23 of AOSIS members submitted their individual views to the UNFCCC on mitigation issues, while during the 2001 to 2006 negotiation stage only four members felt the need to draft individual submission. The same trend, although less pronounced, is observed for adaptation, with 43% of references made on behalf of the group in the final negotiation phase. Again Tuvalu, accounting for 31% of all statements made by AOSIS members during that time period, is leading the pack. Regarding adaptation, 19 AOSIS members decided to express their views in individual submissions between 2006 and 2011 (significantly more than between 2001 and 2005, when only 7 members made individual submission).

Do these results imply the decline of within-group unity regarding mitigation and adaptation? A deeper analysis of the positions displayed by SIDS on emission reduction targets for Annex I countries and on adaptation measures does not support such a divergence of positions. Analysing the last negotiation period, AOSIS as a group calls for an aggregate emission reduction of at least 40% by 2020 in the developed world, a view which is reflected in most individual submissions of AOSIS members, although the Maldives were calling for even more stringent targets of 45%.[18] There also seems to be

broad agreement that mitigation efforts should be based on historic responsibilities. On mitigation, therefore, a higher level of fragmentation during the last negotiation period cannot be deduced. Individual submissions are either used to reiterate the view of the whole group, or to promote particular ideas. An example for the latter would be Micronesia's repeated submissions on "fast start mitigation strategies".[19]. Finally, Tuvalu used its individual submissions on mitigation inter alia to raise the pressure on Annex I parties by illustrating that these countries contributed approximately 75% of all anthropogenic CO_2 emissions to date.[20] In terms of adaptation, the positions displayed in group and in individual submissions also evidence high agreement among AOSIS members. Sometimes individual submissions are at the forefront of positions that are later adopted by the whole group, such as in the case of extending the share of proceeds to finance adaptation also to Joint Implementation and to Emissions Trading, which has been pursued by Tuvalu, supported then by individual SIDS and later taken up by the whole group.[21] Sometimes, individual submissions reinforce what has been already proposed in group submissions, or provide more detail on specific aspects, such as on the institutional framework for adaptation or on the insurance mechanism. Thus, individual submissions on mitigation and adaptation seem to reflect an extra effort of small island states to corroborate their positions, but do not back the hypothesis of increased disunity within AOSIS.

A special case, however, exists on submissions about how to treat the Copenhagen Accord. Submissions by individual SIDS in 2010 evidence strong disagreements on whether the text of the Copenhagen Accord should be used for future negotiations under the Convention: while several countries (Barbados, Belize, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Singapore) mention that contents of the Copenhagen Accord should flow into the negotiations (albeit with improvements), others, such as Cuba and Tuvalu are strongly against it: "it is Tuvalu's firm view that the Copenhagen Accord should not be the basis for, or have any influencing role, on the Chair's text. The Copenhagen Accord is a fundamentally flawed document".[22] Indeed, in an interview in 2010, an AOSIS delegate, commented that there may be "some degree of concern amongst the AOSIS members that maybe there was some betrayal, maybe there was some breach of the common trust" when some members associated with the Copenhagen Accord.[23] However, the same delegate explained that AOSIS as a group had to move on from such disagreement and keep firm on its main negotiation goals.

5.3. Positions on LULUCF and REDD

The general analysis of submissions by AOSIS countries over the period 1995-2011 has revealed a noticeable evolution in the importance of the forestry negotiation topics for this group of countries. The forestry negotiations encompass rules for how industrialized countries should account for the sequestration or emission of greenhouse gases from forests and other land-use activities in their emission inventories and in their emission reduction targets (negotiations on LULUCF), rules for what types of forestry and land-use activities should be included in the CDM (LULUCF in the CDM), and, more recently, rules on a possible new mechanism to address emissions from deforestation and land degradation in developing countries (REDD negotiations[24]). As explained above and shown in Figure 6, individual SIDS seem to be more active than AOSIS as a group in the discussions about forestry issues, particularly in the period from 2006 on.

--- figure 6 about here ---

The negotiations on forestry-related issues reveal a divide within the AOSIS members, which started to exist already in the early negotiations in the 1990s. Between 1998 and 2002, AOSIS as a group made five written submissions related to LULUCF, which reveal a consistently strict position regarding how land-use and forestry activities should be considered both by the industrialized countrie as part of their mitigation efforts, and by developing countries under the CDM. Two quotes make this clear: "AOSIS is in favour of very strict considerations to be met if land use change and forestry activities are to be included in the mitigation efforts of the industrialised countries";[25] "the primary priority should rest with the reduction of emissions and that enhancement of sinks is an additional activity in the short term".[26] A joint submission by Samoa and Tuvalu and an individual submission by Tuvalu, both from 2000, support this strictness. In addition, Tuvalu asks for limited acceptability of LULUCF activities as Joint Implementation projects, and for no LULUCF activities in the CDM during the first commitment period, due to concerns about environmental integrity, accounting and institutional issues.[27] On the other hand, the Dominican Republic, with a group of Latin American countries, made two submissions proposing which forestry activities should be included in the CDM. These proposals were much more lenient than those of AOSIS as a group: they not only state that LULUCF activities should be eligible as CDM projects, but also ask for an inclusion of activities that slow, reduce or avoid deforestation, including forest management.[28] These submissions thus point toward a certain fragmentation, and indicate that individual self-interests may dominate group cohesion on this issue.

The division becomes clearer in the later submissions regarding LULUCF from 2009 on: in this period, no joint AOSIS submission exists on the topic; instead, there are a host of individual submissions by Belize, Tuvalu, Singapore and Papua New Guinea,, as well as a joint submission by Guyana and Papua New Guinea with a large group of other (non-AOSIS) non-Annex I countries. These submissions point towards diverging interests and opinions.[29] It appears likely that AOSIS countries could not agree on a group submission about LULUCF after 2009, so that individual countries have submitted their positions independently from each other.

With regard to REDD, the fragmentation of opinions within AOSIS is even more pronounced. The concept of reducing emissions from deforestation was first introduced in the negotiations jointly by Papua New Guinea and Costa Rica at COP11 in Montreal in 2005.[30] Parties agreed to start discussing the topic as a new agenda item, and launched a 2-year consultation process. At COP13, reducing emissions from forest degradation was also included in the discussions, giving place to REDD. Since then, negotiations have continued on how to address the methodological issues required to measure emission reductions from deforestation and forest degradation, and on how to generate positive incentives to halt these emissions (Fry, 2008; Sanz-Sanchez, 2011).

All submissions from SIDS regarding this topic have been made either by individual countries or by distinct groups of countries. No group AOSIS submission exists on REDD. Diverging opinions mainly concern questions about whether emission reduction from REDD activities should be used as offsets in the carbon market in a CDM-type or a sectoral mechanism, whether and how early action by countries that have already made efforts to preserve their forests should be recognized, and how to address the balance of supply and demand for carbon credits in the market (on REDD, see Martinet and Christovam, 2009; Verchot and Petkova, 2010). Belize, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Suriname and Vanuatu are generally pro-markets, pro-recognition of early action and concerned about prices for carbon offsets. Tuvalu, on the other hand, makes clear in several submissions that it is against the inclusion of REDD activities in the carbon market, even in the form of pilot projects, and against granting credits for early action. Instead, it made a proposal for a non-market REDD mechanism.[31]

With regard to forestry, then, there is a divide between AOSIS members. The number of individual submissions indicates disagreement and fragmentation, rather than serving to strengthen a common position as was the case for mitigation.

6. Concluding Remarks: AOSIS' role in the future: unity versus fragmentation?

While tensions clearly exist, AOSIS remains a tightly coordinated negotiation coalition in the climate change process. Its members are acutely aware of their need for a strong unified voice to convince other, larger countries of ambitious action on climate change. As one interviewee emphasizes, "we can't fight amongst ourselves, because we are not the enemy."[32] Nonetheless, AOSIS member states are affected by climate change and climate policies in different ways. It is thus not surprising to note that different AOSIS countries accord different priorities to different agenda items, as for instance mitigation compared to adaptation or forestry-related issues.

As the climate change agenda has grown since COP1, AOSIS member states increasingly participate in the negotiations as individual parties rather than on behalf of the coalition. In particular, some areas such as LULUCF and REDD, are contentious within AOSIS and sometimes even provoke open confrontation. At first glance, this may suggest that AOSIS has become less cohesive and more fragmented over time. A more detailed analysis, however, indicates that many of the individual contributions reiterate and reinforce group positions. I sum, then, the Alliance has been able to uphold unity. Although interviewees comment on internal controversies and criticism, they seem to feel overall that SIDS are a relatively homogenous group with little disagreement.[33] Differences in priorities and capacities are even harnessed, as the Samoan interviewee explains. Some low-lying atoll countries like Tuvalu are more vulnerable than Samoa, he says, so "the best we can do for Tuvalu is to give them their space. Because people will listen more to Tuvalu than to us."[34]

Indeed, Tuvalu's voice and that of AOSIS are listened to in the climate change negotiations. In Durban, the Alliance joined forces with other vulnerable and progressive countries, and was able to obtain many of its goals, especially regarding adaptation, finance, technology transfer and capacity building. On mitigation, however, the so-called Durban Package "falls well short of what these countries wanted – and need to avoid catastrophic climate change impacts" (Wold, 2012).

AOSIS remains a key player in global climate policy and one of the most active proponents of deep cuts in global greenhouse gas emissions. In spite of a proliferation of issues in the UNFCCC process, the core of AOSIS negotiating position is strong and

urgent enough to keep the Alliance together. Unfortunately, however, emissions cuts need to come from larger countries that are reluctant to pay heed to the warnings of AOSIS. As cohesive as the Alliance thus may be, at the end of the day, action must come from other countries.

Acknowledgements

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Endnotes

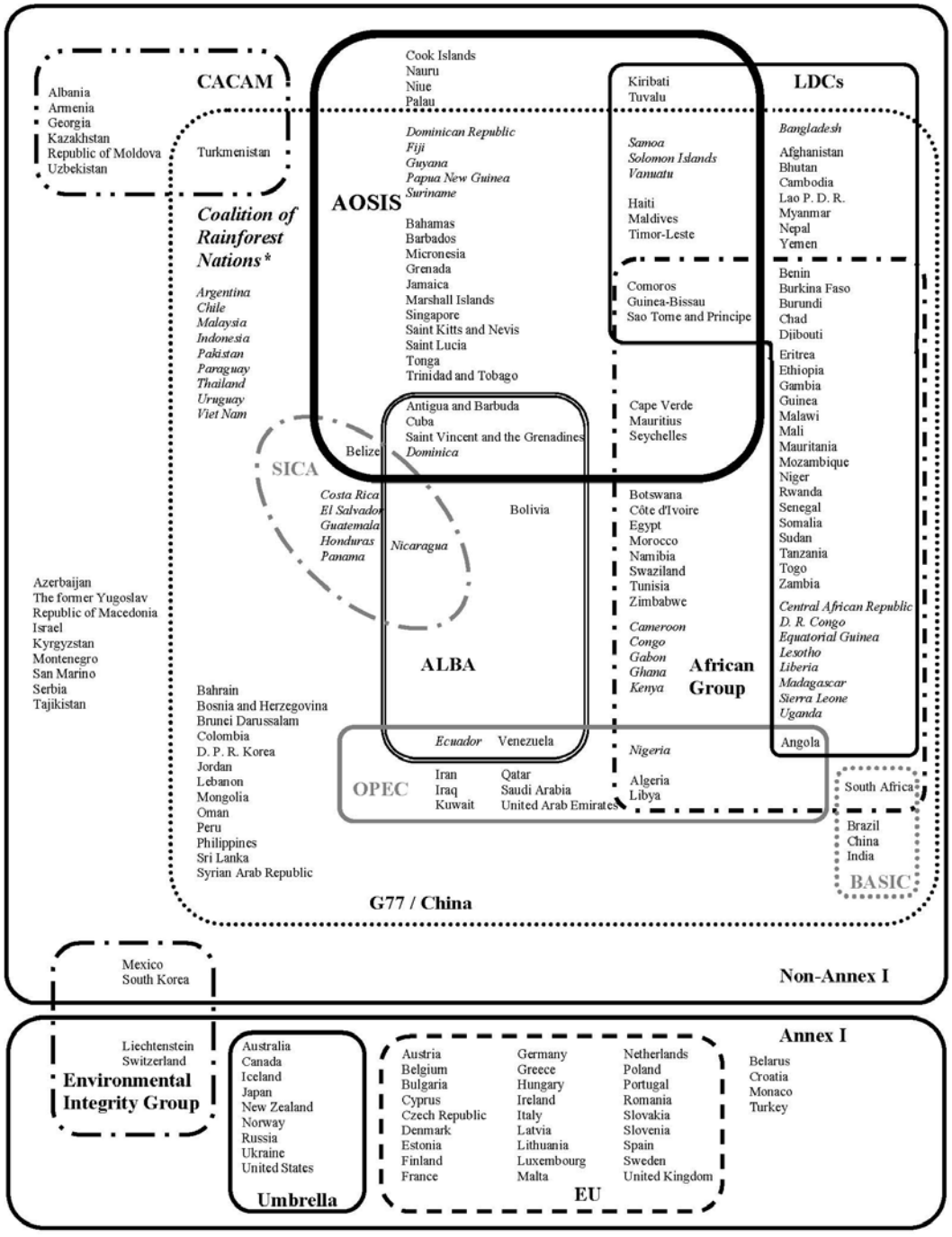
1. Interview with delegate from an AOSIS member country, 4th June 2010, Bonn.
2. Figures are for 2009, and for 2005 for emissions, see Betzold (2010).
3. See rule 22.1 of the draft Rules of Procedure (FCCC/CP/1996/2), or UNFCCC website at http://unfccc.int/essential_background/convention/convention_bodies/bureau/items/3431.php.
4. These seats are hard fought for, as two anonymous reviewers stressed. See CMP1 decisions (FCCC/KP/CMP/2005/8/Add.1), decision 1/CMP.4 (FCCC/KP/CMP/2008/11/Add.2) and decision 1/CP.16 (FCCC/CP/2010/7/Add.1).
5. We thank Joyeeta Gupta for bringing up this point.
6. As two anonymous reviewers pointed out, submissions are often called for on technical issues or where progress is difficult to obtain, so that comparisons across topics may be biased. Despite this, submissions still can highlight differences in priorities or perspectives among parties on the issues on which submissions are available.
7. See the UNFCCC website at http://unfccc.int/meetings/archive/items/2749.php.
8. All lists of participants are available online from the UNFCCC website at http://unfccc.int/documentation/documents /items/3595.php.
9. The ENB can only report on negotiation sessions open to observers. Our coding thus assumes that the positions and behaviour revealed in these open sessions are good proxies for the overall negotiation behaviour of parties.
10. Group submissions are typically submitted by the Chair of the Alliance on behalf of AOSIS and were hence counted as a submission by AOSIS and not as a submission by the country holding the Chair. Submissions made by two or more AOSIS members jointly were counted more than once.
11. It should be noted that among the most active AOSIS countries tend to be those who invite highly skilled external experts to join their delegation. Tuvalu's activism, for example, can be attributed to its chief negotiator Ian Fry, an Australian-born former Greenpeace activist. Other examples are Kevin Conrad, Papua New Guinea's UN Special Envoy and Ambassador for Climate Change and Environment, or a representative of the Foundation of International Environmental Law and Development serving on Micronesia's delegation. Thus, it seems that skilled leadership and outside expertise play an important role for small island states in the climate change negotiations.
12. The data and detailed analysis are not shown due to space reasons, but are available from the authors on request.
13. See submission by Cook Islands in FCCC/AWGLCA/2010/MISC.2/Add.1, p.8-9.
14. While some countries strictly include only members of government in their national delegations, others are open to including representatives of civil society or NGOs even in cases where these do not contribute directly to the negotiations. Hence, the size of the delegation is by itself not a good indicator of bargaining resources of the party.
15. An alternative explanation could be that, faced with limited resources, countries within the AOSIS coalition coordinate the composition of their national delegations so that overall they have experts in all negotiation topics across all SIDS, who can inform each other about the progress in each topic. Even in this case, having the

experts for one particular topic may be a sign of salience of this topic for a particular country.

16. Interview with delegate from the Maldives, 10th June 2010, Bonn. This view is also reflected in the only individual submission discussing mitigation made by the Maldives, which states that "the required level of financial resources [for adaptation] should be assessed in light of other elements of the proposed outcome for Cancun including the expected global goal, Annex I mitigation efforts and the likely resulting impacts on developing countries" (see document FCCC/AWGLCA/2010/MISC.2, p. 69). A higher mitigation effort in the developed world, thus, would lead to lower financial needs for adaptation. Given that the Maldives call for higher targets that the rest of AOSIS (45% instead of 40%), this is congruent with the statement made in the interview that mitigation should be prioritized over adaptation.
17. Phone interview with delegate from an AOSIS member country, 13th October 2009.
18. Submission by the Maldives in document FCCC/AWGLCA/2010/MISC.2, p. 69.
19. See for example submission by Micronesia in document FCCC/AWGLCA/2008/MISC.1, p. 41.
20. Submission by Tuvalu in document FCCC/KP/AWG/2009/MISC.1/Add.1, p. 10-14.
21. The CDM, Joint Implementation and Emissions Trading are instruments of the Kyoto Protocol that provide flexibility in terms of where to achieve emission reductions. Currently, a 2% share of proceeds from the CDM is used to finance adaptation, but such a levy is not applied to Joint Implementation or Emissions Trading. See proposal by Tuvalu for an International Blueprint on Adaptation in FCCC/CP/2007/Misc.2, and subsequent submissions supporting the share of proceeds expansion in FCCC/SBI/2008/MISC.10, FCCC/AWGLCA/2009/MISC.4, FCCC/AWGLCA/2009/MISC.8 and FCCC/CP/2010/3. It should be noted however that having a share of proceeds for adaptation from all three Kyoto mechanisms was already an AOSIS position during the negotiations towards the Marrakesh Accords in 2001.
22. Submissions contained in documents FCCC/AWGLCA/2010/MISC.1, FCCC/AWGLCA/2010/MISC.2, FCCC/AWGLCA/2010/MISC.2/Add.1 and FCCC/AWGLCA/2010/MISC.2/Add.2. Tuvalu's quote is from the last document listed, p.6.
23. Interview with delegate from an AOSIS member country, 11th April 2010, Bonn.
24. The REDD negotiations have been expanded to include also negotiations on the conservation and enhancement of forests and on sustainable forest management, which is usually known as "REDD+". Some countries also support the inclusion of other land-related activities in the REDD mechanism, such as agriculture and related soil carbon content, which is known by experts as "REDD++". For simplicity, in this article we will generally refer to all these topics as REDD negotiations.
25. Submission by AOSIS in document FCCC/CP/1998/MISC.1, p. 47.
26. Submission by AOSIS in document FCCC/SBSTA/1999/MISC.2, p. 47.
27. Submission by Tuvalu in document FCCC/SB/2000/MISC.1/Add.2.
28. Submissions in documents FCCC/SB/1999/MISC.10/Add.3 and FCCC/SB/2000/MISC.1/Add.2.
29. The topics of these submissions are mostly technical, e.g. how to better account for LULUCF emissions, what types of activities should be included in LULUCF (in general and in the CDM), and what reference levels should be used to determine LULUCF emissions.
30. Submission by Papua New Guinea and Panama in document FCCC/CP/2005/MISC.1, p. 2-11.
31. Submissions by Tuvalu in documents FCCC/SBSTA/2007/MISC.2/Add.1 and FCCC/SBSTA/2009/MISC.1/Add.1.

32. Interview with delegate from an AOSIS member country, 4th April 2010, Bonn.
33. Interview with delegate from an AOSIS member country, 4th April 2010, Bonn; Interview with delegate from an AOSIS member country, 4th June 2010, Bonn.
34. Interview with delegate from an AOSIS member country, 4th June 2010, Bonn.

Figure 1: country groups in the climate change negotiations.



* countries in italics form part of the Coalition of Rainforest Nations.

Source: Adapted from Castro et al. (2011, p. 6).

Figure 2: count of AOSIS and AOSIS member written submissions.

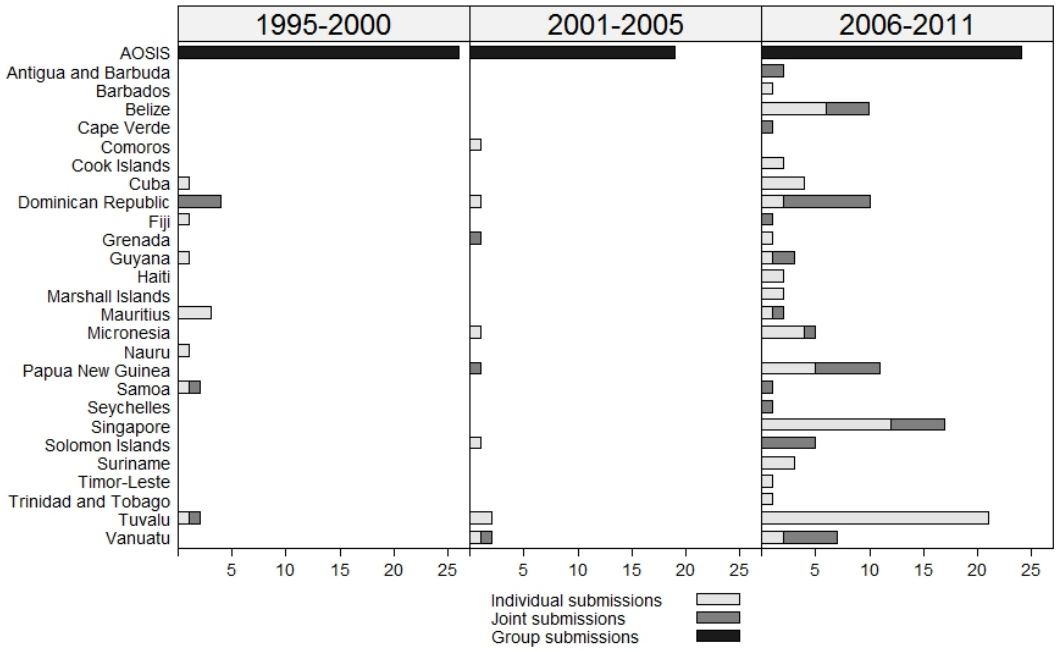


Figure 3: main topics of AOSIS and AOSIS member written submissions (percentage of total submissions within the period).

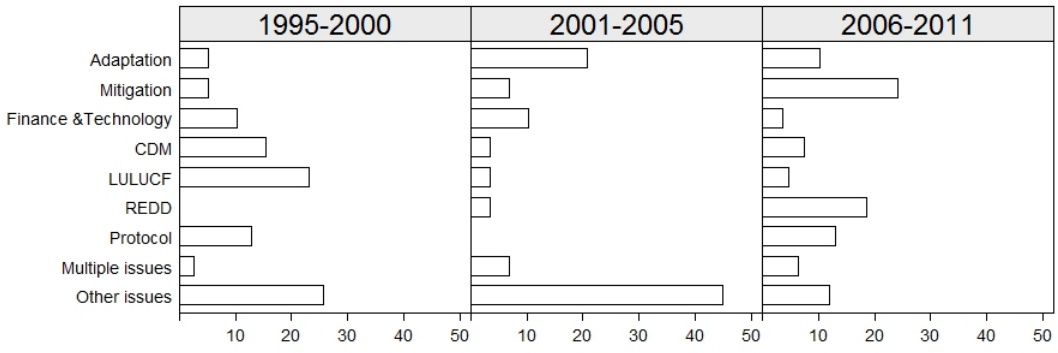
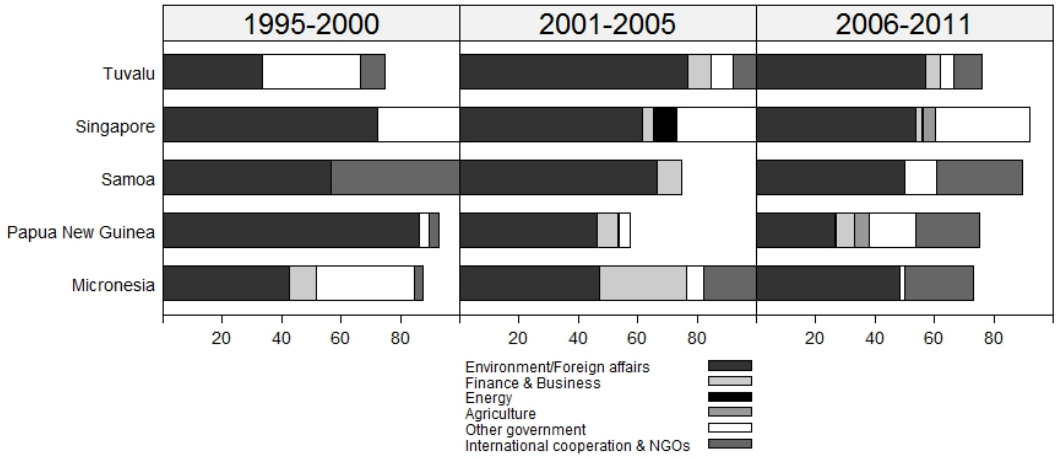
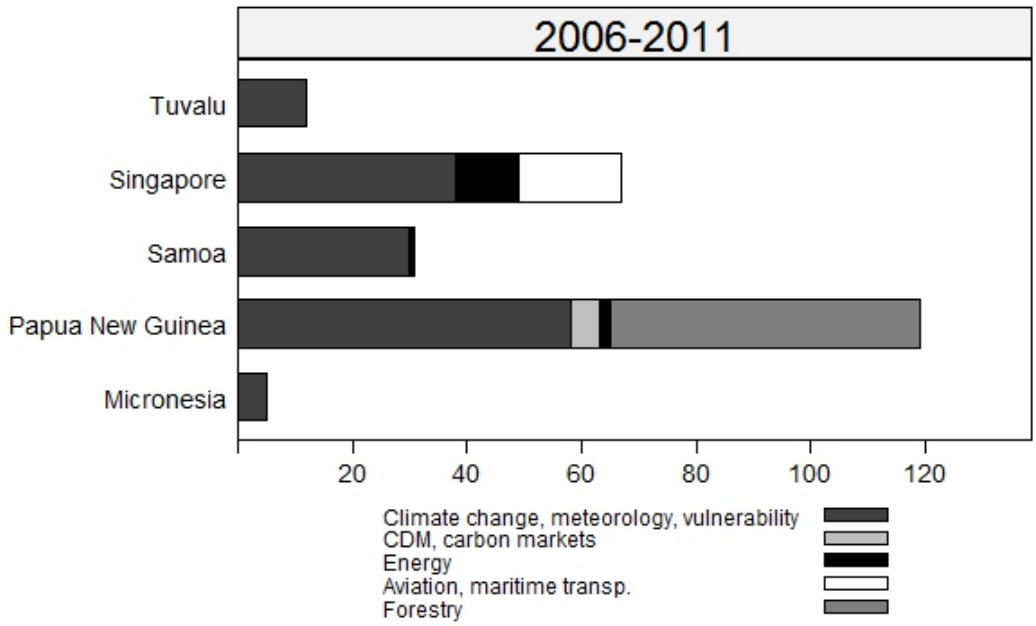


Figure 4: composition of selected AOSIS member delegations, by sector (percentage of total delegates in analysed meetings).



Note: See Appendix A for a description of how sectors were coded. Source: participant lists to UNFCCC meetings.

Figure 5: representation of interest groups in selected AOSIS member delegations (keyword counts in analyzed meetings).



Note: See Appendix A for a description of how sectors were coded. Source: participant lists to UNFCCC meetings.

Figure 6: word counts in AOSIS and AOSIS member submissions (LULUCF/REDD/forest), per period.

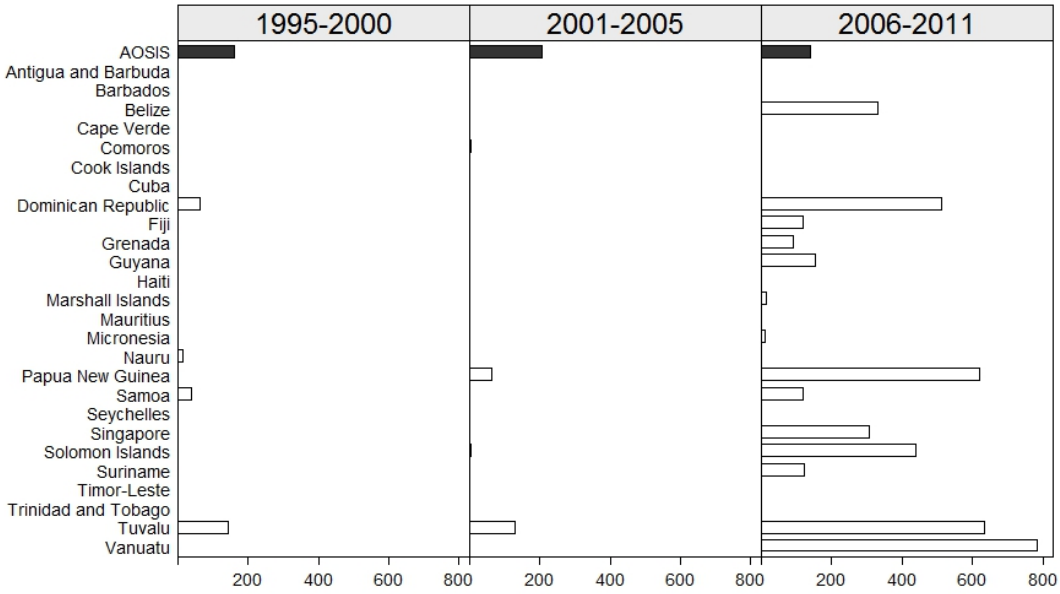


Table 1: Negotiation topics and respective keywords

Negotiation topic	Keywords	Negotiation topic	Keywords
Adaptation	Adapt Vulner	Market mechanisms	Market
Mitigation	Mitig Reduc Commitm Target	Finance and support	Support Financ Fund
		Technology transfer, capacity building	Technol Capacity
LULUCF and REDD	LULUCF REDD Forest	Impact of response measures	Response measure

Table 2: Negotiation meetings in which the participant lists were coded

Meeting	Location/Date	Importance
COP1	Berlin, April 1995	First COP, UNFCCC entered into force
SB6[1]	Bonn, August 1997	Year in which Kyoto Protocol was adopted
COP3	Kyoto, December 1997	Adoption of the Kyoto Protocol
SB12	Bonn, June 2000	Negotiations on the detailed rules of the Kyoto Protocol
COP6	The Hague, November 2000	Negotiations on the detailed rules of the Kyoto Protocol
COP6*bis*	Bonn, July 2001	Negotiations on the detailed rules of the Kyoto Protocol
COP7	Marrakesh, October 2001	Adoption of the Marrakesh Accords (detailed rules of the Kyoto Protocol)
SB22	Bonn, May 2005	Year in which the Kyoto Protocol entered into force
COP11	Montreal, December 2005	The Kyoto Protocol enters into force; initiation of the negotiations towards a second commitment period (Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol, AWG-KP)
COP13	Bali, December 2007	Adoption of the Bali Action Plan; initiation of the negotiations towards a comprehensive long-term climate agreement (Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperation under the Convention, AWG-LCA)
SB28	Bonn, June 2008	AWG-KP and AWG-LCA continue
COP14	Poznan, December 2008	AWG-KP and AWG-LCA continue
SB30	Bonn, June 2009	AWG-KP and AWG-LCA continue
COP15	Copenhagen, December 2009	AWG-KP and AWG-LCA are supposed to finish their work; Copenhagen Accord
SB32	Bonn, June 2010	AWG-KP and AWG-LCA continue
COP16	Cancún, December 2010	Cancún Agreements

Note: This table does not list all negotiation meetings, but just some of the most important ones, coded for this analysis. For a full list of negotiation meetings, refer to http://unfccc.int/meetings/archive/items/2749.php.

[1] SB stands for subsidiary bodies. The Convention has two subsidiary bodies, the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI). They usually meet during the COPs as well as every June in Bonn.

Table 3: Number of oral interventions of most active AOSIS countries per negotiation topic, December 2007 – December 2009

Country	Adaptation, vulnerability	Mitigation, compliance	Kyoto flexibility mechanisms	Sectoral mechanisms, national policies	Monitoring, reporting and verification	LULUCF	REDD	Finance	Capacity building, tech. transfer, R&D	Conse-quences climate policies	Shared vision
AOSIS	51	76	26	1	12	3	1	65	32	8	14
Tuvalu	7	40	27	7	2	20	16	16	0	4	3
Singapore	1	23	5	3	1	0	2	0	0	3	1
Micronesia	4	17	8	4	4	1	0	1	0	0	1
PNG	0	5	3	0	0	10	18	3	1	0	0
Guyana	1	3	0	0	0	1	15	2	2	0	1
Barbados	2	3	0	1	0	0	0	4	2	4	2

Note: PNG stands for Papua New Guinea. Source: Earth Negotiation Bulletins (IISD, 2007-2009), own coding.

Table 4: Number of delegates from AOSIS countries participating in UNFCCC meetings, descriptive statistics (1995 – 2010, selected meetings)

Meeting	Date	Total AOSIS	Share of all party total	Mean per country	Min per country	Max per country	St. Dev.	Country/ies with most delegates
COP1	April 1995	67	8.85%	2.09	1	5	1.18	Micronesia, Papua New Guinea
SB6[2]	August 1997	31	n/a	1.55	1	5	1.02	Singapore
COP3	December 1997	115	7.50%	3.83	1	15	2.98	Micronesia
SB12	June 2000	39	4.84%	1.56	1	5	0.98	Samoa
COP6	November 2000	153	6.97%	4.25	1	12	2.49	Micronesia
COP6*bis*	July 2001	117	6.45%	3.34	1	9	2.19	Papua New Guinea, Samoa
COP7	October 2001	61	2.53%	2.26	1	6	1.35	Samoa
SB22	May 2005	45	4.86%	1.61	1	5	1.08	Tuvalu
COP11	December 2005	137	4.89%	3.91	1	15	3.13	Papua New Guinea
COP13	December 2007	344	9.81%	9.05	1	61	11.80	Singapore
SB28	June 2008	94	7.15%	2.76	1	17	2.67	Singapore
COP14	December 2008	220	5.56%	5.64	1	27	5.56	Singapore
SB30	June 2009	121	6.92%	3.36	1	19	3.71	Singapore
COP15	December 2009	638	6.03%	16.36	5	82	14.43	Papua New Guinea
SB32	June 2010	143	8.57%	3.86	1	28	4.62	Singapore
COP16	December 2010	418	8.06%	11.00	3	41	9.33	Singapore

Source: participant lists to UNFCCC meetings.

[2] SB stands for subsidiary bodies. The Convention has two subsidiary bodies, the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI). They usually meet during the COPs as well as every June in Bonn.

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Appendix A: Coding rules for the participant lists

Sector	Coding rules for Figure 4
Environment / Foreign Affairs	Whenever "climate change", “environment”, or “foreign” is included in name of ministry, or for the “Ministry of Sustainable Development”. Also includes all heads of state, and whenever a diplomat (e.g. ambassador) or a diplomatic mission ("permanent mission", “embassy”) is mentioned. Also whenever a climate change council, office or agency or an environmental or meteorological agency or service is mentioned without specifying another ministry.
Finance / Business	Whenever "finance", "economic", "development" or "planning" is included in name of ministry, except if "environment” is also there. Also: Ministry of Infrastructure, of Home Affairs. Includes also utilities, carbon consultancies (even international ones), business associations, etc.
Energy	Whenever "energy" is included in name of ministry, except if "economic" or "finance" or "environment" is also there.
Agriculture	Whenever "agriculture" or "forest" or similar is included in name of ministry, except if "environment" or "economic" is also there. Also includes national parks or other conservation agencies, or land management agencies, whenever the word "environment" is not included.
Other government	Whenever it is clear that the delegate is from the national government (other ministries, parliament, local governments, various agencies) but not from any of the above.
International cooperation & NGOs	Includes bilateral cooperation agencies or projects thereof (e.g. GTZ), UN or non-UN international agencies (e.g. ACP secretary, Coalition of Rainforest Nations, Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, UNDP, UNEP national offices, etc.), domestic and international NGOs, also those that may be acting as advisors to the government, if mentioning the name of the NGO. Includes also youth representatives.

Note: Delegates serving security, protocol or logistic purposes, from media, university, research institutions or without clear affiliation were not included in the analysis.

Additional categories used in Figure 5 (which may denote specific interests, but can overlap with the previous ones)	
Climate change, meteorology, vulnerability	Count of "national communication", "snc", "focal point", "point focal", "punto focal", "clima", "meteor", "météo", "adapt", "vulnerab", "disaster" and "desastre" within the delegates' affiliations.
CDM, carbon markets	Count of "carbon", "mechanism" and "mecanismo" within the delegates' affiliations.
Energy	Count of "energy" within the delegates' affiliations.
Aviation, maritime, transport	Count of "avia", "maritim" and "transport" within the delegates' affiliations.
Forestry	Count of "forest" and "bosque" within the delegates' affiliations.